



# Backgrounder

## *The 2015 Reportable Diseases Report*

Saskatoon Health Region released the **2015 Reportable Diseases Report** this week. Reportable diseases are diseases with public health significance that have the potential to spread rapidly in the population and are provincially, nationally and internationally reportable.

The two main areas of concern for Saskatoon Health Region are vaccine preventable respiratory infections, specifically influenza and pertussis (whooping cough), as well as enteric infections like salmonella and norovirus that cause diarrhea and vomiting. These two categories of disease carry outbreak or epidemic potential.

Some notable items from that report include:

- Approximately one in five people with laboratory confirmed influenza were hospitalized in 2015.
  - Because influenza is generally under-reported, many more individuals visited emergency departments or were hospitalized for complications, like pneumonia.
- An outbreak of pertussis (whooping cough), another vaccine preventable disease, was declared in 2015, involving 94 cases.
  - The communities affected included Saskatoon, Rosthern, Humboldt, and the Watrous and Wadena areas.
- Enteric illness, like norovirus, can quickly escalate to outbreaks within a community. One particular area of concern is long term care (LTC), where vulnerable people reside and infection can spread quickly.
  - A total of 27 outbreaks of enteric illness, like norovirus were reported in long term care centres in the region. That number is down from the previous season, when 38 cases were reported.
  - Enteric illness rates for the Region in 2015 are on par with the Saskatchewan and Canadian rates.
- Antibiotic resistant organisms (AROs), such as Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) (also known as super-bugs) have increased steadily in the last 10 years.
  - Increased screening, associated with outbreaks in long term care and acute care facilities, has resulted in increased case findings.
  - MRSA accounted for 87 per cent of all reportable AROs in the last five years.

With the anticipated increase in influenza cases over the holiday season, Saskatoon Health Region wants to highlight the importance of vaccination, which is the most effective way to prevent vaccine preventable disease like influenza and pertussis, as well as diligent hand washing.

To promote hand hygiene, a Public Health Disease Control's *Germ Smart* campaign launched in 2014 and has expanded from schools and hospitals to local organizations. Hand hygiene is the single most effective way to avoid illness from infections that are not vaccine preventable.

You can find the full report on Public Health's [Community View website](#) under "Our Population Our Health".